

**Remarks**

Claims 1, 4-12, 15-19 and 22-24 remain. Claims 2-3, 13-14 and 20-21 have been canceled.

All claims have been rejected under Section 103(a) as being unpatentable over US 6,842,313 B1 (Mallary) in view of US 2005/0018348 A1 (Lille et al.). For the reasons below Applicants believe that a *prima facie* case of obviousness has not been established.

First, Mallary does not teach that for which it is asserted in the Office Action, i.e., “side shields opposite sides of the write pole … (see elements 104, 110… )”. The shields 104, 110 in Fig. 4 of Mallary are conventional *read* shields for the magnetoresistive (GMR) read head. This is explained in Mallary at col. 8, lines 51-59. The read shields 104, 110 that shield the read head (GMR sensor stripe 106) in Mallary thus correspond to the read shields S1, S2 that shield the read head 60 in Applicants’ Fig. 1. Thus Mallary does not teach a shield “substantially surrounding the write pole tip and substantially confining the magnetic flux from the write pole tip to the data track width”, as stated in Applicants’ independent claims. Mallary teaches only a floating trailing write pole shield (item 72 in Fig. 3). Applicants’ independent claims have been amended to better clarify the concept of a shield that “substantially surrounds” the write pole tip.

Second, Lille teaches that the resistive heater be no wider than the track width to prevent heating adjacent tracks (Lille at lines 24-28 of paragraph 0029). Lille thus relates to a system with a “small area” heater that heats only the data track, like the prior art described in the Background section of Applicants’ specification (page 3, lines 17-22). This is in contrast to Applicants’ invention, as described in Applicants’ independent claims, wherein “regions of the recording layer wider than the track are heated, but thermally-assisted magnetic recording occurs only in the track”. Because Lille relates to a system with a “small area” heater that heats only the data track there is no motivation to require write shields to confine the write field to just the data track, and thus no motivation to combine Lille with Mallary (or any other reference that teaches a write shield).

In view of the above amendment and comments Applicants believe all remaining claims are in condition for allowance. The Examiner is invited to call Applicants' attorney if a telephone conference will expedite the prosecution of this application.

Respectfully submitted,

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**/ Thomas R. Berthold, Reg. No. 28,689 /**

Thomas R. Berthold, Attorney for Applicants  
Reg. No. 28,689  
18938 Congress Junction Ct.  
Saratoga, CA 95070-4570  
Phone: (408) 396-8411  
Fax: (408) 904-6605